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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	AOB item for the meeting of the “Agriculture and Fisheries” Council on 28-29 September 2026: Outcome of the MED9 meeting of Ministers of Agriculture and Ministers responsible for demography (Zadar, 5-7 July 2026) - Information from Croatia

As part of the Croatian presidency of the MED9 counties¹, an informal meeting of Ministers of Agriculture and Ministers responsible for demography of the Mediterranean EU Member States was held in Zadar from 5 to 7 July 2026.

The meeting brought together ministers and other representatives of nine Mediterranean countries and representatives of *CEJA*², who discussed the future of young farmers through introductory presentations and two panels, with an emphasis on innovation and knowledge exchange, as well as national models for the return of emigrants and the revitalization and development of rural areas.

¹ Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain

² Conseil Européen des Jeunes Agriculteurs - European Council of Young Farmers

The participants of the meeting were addressed via video message by the European Commission Commissioner for the Mediterranean, Ms. Dubravka Šuica, and the European Commission Director-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, Ms. Elisabeth Werner.

In their interventions, the participants specifically referred to the *Strategy for Generational Renewal in Agriculture of the European Union*³, presented by the European Commission last October, whose priorities are now part of the legislative proposal for the future Common Agricultural Policy. They also stressed the importance of an integrated approach linking agriculture, demography, regional and rural development, housing policy, mobility, labour market and social policy in order to ensure decent living and working conditions with adequate income for young people and their families in rural areas.

As a result, *Joint Statement of the MED9 Member States* (attached) was adopted, which, among other things, confirmed several key principles. Generational renewal in agriculture is essential for long-term food security and food safety for future generations in Europe. Demographic revitalization requires an integrated approach, i.e. the development of infrastructure, health and social services and employment alongside agriculture. Returnees can be an important development potential of rural areas, bringing new knowledge, experience and entrepreneurial initiatives.

³ COM(2025) 872 final



The future of young farmers in the context of knowledge exchange and innovation in agriculture

Emigration and revitalisation of rural areas in the MED9 region: national return and integration models and linking with local development and employment

We, the Ministers of Agriculture and Ministers responsible for Demography of Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and Croatia or their representatives, convened in Croatia on the 6 July 2026, as representatives of the MED9 initiative, to reaffirm our commitment to addressing the key challenges in the Mediterranean region with regard to the future of young farmers, their contribution to the exchange of knowledge and innovation in agriculture as well as to the demographic revitalisation of rural areas and the further strengthening of local development and employment opportunities;

We acknowledge the objectives of our future Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which include inter alia, supporting young farmers and new farmers, encouraging generational renewal, accelerating innovation and access to knowledge and strengthening synergies and complementarities between different policies;

We take note of the Communication from the Commission on the Strategy for Generational Renewal in Agriculture, published on 21 October 2025 (COM(2025) 872 final), as well as the proposal for all EU Member States to adopt their national strategies for generational renewal by 2028;

We take note of the Communication from the Commission on “Demographic change in Europe: a toolbox for action”, published on 11 October 2023, which underlines the importance of integrated and place-based approaches to demographic change, including measures aimed at strengthening regional resilience, supporting rural areas, addressing labour shortages and fostering the effective integration and retention of people across all generations.

We recall the Council Conclusions on the role of cohesion policy in addressing demographic challenges in the European Union, adopted on 28 November 2024, which emphasise the importance of integrated territorial approaches, balanced regional development, talent retention and measures aimed at strengthening the long-term resilience and competitiveness of regions affected by demographic decline and outward mobility.

We also recall the Council Conclusions on a long-term vision for the EU's rural areas, adopted on 20 November 2023, which emphasise the importance of promoting generational renewal to sustain agricultural activity, ensuring vibrant rural communities, and enhancing the long-term resilience, prosperity, and competitiveness of these territories.

We underline the importance of recognising demographic change as a horizontal priority within the future Multiannual Financial Framework 2028–2034, including by strengthening the integration of demographic considerations across cohesion, agricultural, employment and rural and regional development policies.

We recognise the fact that only the funds of the Common Agricultural Policy are not sufficient to achieve all the desired objectives;

We recognise that addressing demographic challenges and ensuring the long-term vitality of rural areas requires a broader and integrated policy approach that goes beyond agricultural funding alone.

In this context, we recognise the contribution that returnees can make to local and regional development through the transfer of knowledge, skills, capital and international experience, particularly in the context of sustainable economic growth, demographic revitalisation and the strengthening of social and territorial cohesion in rural and demographically affected areas.

We pledge:

- That generational renewal is essential to safeguard the future of European agriculture and to ensure long-term food security and food safety for future generations;
- That generational renewal in agriculture should not be regarded solely as a sectoral issue, but also as a key driver for the demographic revitalisation of rural areas, contributing to population retention, quality jobs and high quality of life across generations and thus strengthening the long-term resilience and social cohesion of local communities;

- The need to ensure adequate and targeted funding for the needs of young farmers in the future programming period to properly exploit their enormous potential in shaping a sustainable and competitive agricultural sector, including through the application of innovation, new technologies and business models while fostering the exchange of knowledge as well as facilitating access to land and investment resources;
- The strengthening of further cooperation and exchanging information and knowledge related to the application of new technologies and digitalisation in agriculture, as well as further promotion of the results of applicable research in agricultural practice, especially among young and new farmers;
- The importance of an integrated approach linking agricultural, demographic, regional and rural development, housing, rural mobility, labour market and social policies, with a view to ensuring adequate living and working conditions, along with adequate incomes for young people and young families in rural areas encouraging demographic revitalisation;
- That decisions by young people to remain in or move to rural areas depend not only on access to land and financing, but also on the availability of childcare and education facilities, healthcare and social services, affordable housing, transport and digital connectivity, as well as employment and entrepreneurship opportunities and access to culture and leisure opportunities;
- The importance of strengthening demographic resilience in rural and demographically affected areas, taking into account their specific territorial characteristics;
- The importance of exchanging experiences and best practices among MED9 countries in the fields of demographic revitalisation, generational renewal and policies aimed at long-term sustainability of rural areas.

This Ministerial meeting demonstrates our determination to address generational renewal in agriculture enhancing demographic revitalisation and securing a resilient and prosperous future for agriculture and rural communities.